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During the 1850s, slavery became a hot political issue. Northern states, with their factories and industries, opposed slavery. Southern states, with their slave-based agricultural plantations, supported the "peculiar institution."

Without slaves, Southerners worried that they—and their way of life—could not survive. Furthermore, people in the South deeply resented people in the North trying to tell them how to run their lives.

On a personal level, Abraham Lincoln deeply detested slavery. Beyond his personal viewpoint, however, he saw that the issue was creating a deep divide in America. He knew that the success of a relatively new country depended on everyone working together. The United States could not succeed as a nation with half the states allowing slavery and half the states outlawing it.

In 1858, the Republican Party nominated Lincoln for the U.S. Senate. Accepting his party's nomination, Lincoln said:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure being half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the country to fall - but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will be one way or the other.

Lincoln's opponent for the Senate was none other than his old rival, Stephen Douglas.

Douglas believed that it was each state's right to choose if it wanted slavery or not. Lincoln and Douglas traveled all over Illinois, debating each other on this issue. Each man was a clever and skilled speaker and thousands of people traveled many miles to hear them debate. It was more than politics—it was real entertainment.

Douglas won.

Despite losing the election, Lincoln had achieved national attention because of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. In 1860, he was the keynote speaker at the Republican National Convention in New York City.

Delivering a passionate and moving speech—highlighting his views on slavery and the importance of the Union—Lincoln greatly impressed the convention audience. As a result, he became the Republican Party's candidate for President of the United States.

Who was his Democratic opponent? His old rival, Stephen Douglas. But Douglas wasn't the only Democratic candidate.

The Democratic Party was divided within itself—with differences between North and South—so the southern Democrats ran their own candidate. This splitting of the Democrats, into two candidates, took votes away from Douglas.

In the national election of 1860, Abraham Lincoln became the 16th President of the United States.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Lincoln-and-Slavery-Abraham-Lincoln>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Lincoln-and-Slavery-Abraham-Lincoln>



Abraham Lincoln

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